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INFO RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 1510
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RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0378
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1952
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0911
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: POLICE SHOOT 17 IN MAIDUGURI, TENSIONS
REMAIN HIGH

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

¶1. (U) On June 11 police in Maiduguri (located in the north-eastern state of Borno) shot and wounded 17 people during a confrontation with members of the Mohammed Yusuf Islamic Movement (MYIM). According to press reports the conflict began when a military and police patrol team from "Operation Flush" (a special anti-robbery security joint task force in Borno State) stopped two MYIM motorcyclists for riding recklessly and without helmets. The motorcyclists were riding in a funeral procession to bury other members of the sect, who had died in an automobile accident the previous day. The officers reportedly began to shoot when other members of MYIM tried to intervene in the motorcyclists' arrest. Fourteen members of the MYIM and three bystanders were injured; fifteen of them were admitted to the hospital, while two were treated and released. There have not so far been any fatalities.

¶2. (U) The Islamic group's leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was in Kaduna at the time of the incident, but MYIM members reportedly met at their headquarters, the Ibn Taimiyya Mosque. According to Guardian Newspaper the Muslim cleric's followers have vowed to fight back. The State has increased security in Maiduguri due to the elevated tension. However, several interlocutors said that the city is now calm and they have not heard of any additional conflicts.

¶3. (C) Comment: Post will continue to monitor the situation as there is a risk of additional violence in Maiduguri following Friday prayers. Additionally, if any of the wounded MYIM members should die, we believe the risk of violence would increase significantly, as the sect will likely retaliate. The fact that an anti-robbery task force chose to stop motorcyclists during a funeral procession for traffic violations and riding without helmets is curious, and suggests the possibility that the officers of Operation Flush were deliberately seeking to provoke the group. Mallam Mohammed Yusuf is often referred to as the spiritual leader of the Jama'at Hijra Wa Taqfir, also known as the "Nigerian Taliban" (and we believe that the MYIM is another name of the same organization), which has long had very tense relations with GON security forces in the northeast of the country. Whatever the origin of this incident, it illustrates the prevailing tensions in the North, which can become violent at short notice. End Comment.

